



Affirmation:

JUNE 1983

United Methodists for Gay and Lesbian Concerns

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BY:.....

General Conference Strategy Set

Since Fall of last year Affirmation members have been considering in various arenas how best to be present at the 1984 General Conference and what specific issues to address. Following preliminary discussions in Boston last September, a legislative task force met in November. This work was reviewed by the Coordinating Committee in January and a plan presented to the April national meeting. While this plan will continue to evolve as additional persons participate, as it presently stands, our General Conference presence will have the three major components identified in the following outline:

1. Churchwide education - As a major media event, the General Conference will provide many opportunities for us to tell our story to United Methodists. We will seek to maximize these possibilities to:

a) raise people's awareness about the presence of lesbians, gay men and their families in the UMC;

b) demonstrate the necessity for an inclusive ministry at every level;

c) model the possibility for increased witness through a church life which takes seriously the connections between racism, sexism, economic exploitation, militarism, and homophobia.

2. Legislation - In coalition with other progressive groups, Affirmation will support the following legislation:

a) Removing the condemnation of the practice of homosexuality presently contained in the Social Principles (Discipline, Para 71F).

b) Adding to the Social Principles para. 72 a statement supporting gay and lesbian rights.

c) Deleting Discipline Para. 906.13, which is presently interpreted by most general church agencies as preventing their initiative in seeking information which would enable improved ministry with gay and lesbian persons.

In addition, Affirmation will prepare

legislation calling for the creation of a General Commission to deal with homophobia which would be similar in function to the Commission on Religion and Race and the Commission on the Status and Role of Women. We also anticipate proposing a resolution speaking to the need for access to adequate health care in minority communities, including the gay and lesbian community.

3. Ministry of Presence - Because homosexuality is expected to be "hot" issue, Affirmation will intentionally provide for a pastoral presence:

a) in support of closeted gay and lesbian delegates and others who may find themselves in particular stress as our issues are debated, including them in the Affirmation community, where appropriate;

b) expressing solidarity with the many lesbians and gay men who will be serving the delegates (as restaurant workers, hotel staff, etc.) and whose community will be heavily impacted by media attention to this issue;

c) offering at least one opportunity for worship.

Each of these components needs to have specific strategies developed, and persons will be needed both to make advance preparations and to do the work at General Conference. It is expected that many persons will want to get more involved in this work, and we are working to facilitate opportunities for that involvement while still being clear that there is life and meaning in Affirmation beyond the General Conference.

A strategy planning session will be held August 5-6 in the Philadelphia area for persons interested in helping to generate ideas and help perfect the General Conference plan (see separate story for more information). On the Thursday evening and Friday (Sept. 15-16), prior to our Fall meeting in Baltimore (Sept. 16-18), we will move to the next stage of implementing strategies. Especially encouraged to attend that working session

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GEN. CONF. PLANNING SESSIONS

As indicated elsewhere in this newsletter plans for the character of Affirmation's General Conference presence are well along. What remains is to design specific strategies and tactics, to determine implementation plans and to accept responsibility for the various parts of the plan.

The next step in the process is a weekend working session focused on strategy development to be held August 5-6 at Calvary United Methodist Church in Philadelphia. The meeting will begin at 7p.m. on Friday and end by 5p.m. Saturday. Affirmation spokespersons Mary Gaddis, Morris Floyd, and east coast members of the Coordinating Committee will provide leadership. Encouraged to attend are those who have participated in various other parts of the General Conference planning so far, as well as new persons who want to get involved at this stage.

There will be no registration fee for the weekend, but participants will be asked to "kick in" a small amount to cover the cost of a light Saturday lunch. We will be "on our own" for other meals. Housing will be provided Friday night, and arrangements will be made to pick up persons arriving by air, train or bus. Coordinating Committee member Ava Scott is in charge of local arrange-

SOME OBSERVATIONS ABOUT A TRAVEL POOL

The travel pool for the Los Angeles meeting resulted in each participant paying only \$100 for travel.

Affirmation is still very much a new organization discovering itself. At the last national meeting in Los Angeles we got some new insight. Since its beginning, this organization has tried to be as inclusive as possible and to attend diligently to issues of shared responsibility, mutual love and support. Yet, the burden of travel costs often precluded various members (especially minorities and women) from being present at national meetings.

When the possibility was raised about sharing the travel costs to national meetings it was received largely with mild reluctance and "it's a good idea but....". By the grace of God and some determination by the host/planners of the recent LA meeting, it was decided that this conclave would operate with a travel pool. All attending would be invited to indicate the cost of their travel fares and that total amount

would be divided equally by the total number of participants. Clearly, this was more costly to those locals who did not have to travel from the Midwest or East Coast.

ments. Those planning to attend should contact her by July 29, indicating travel method and arrival time. Ava will respond with detailed directions for those traveling by car and appropriate instructions for those arriving by other conveyance.

The next planning session will focus on implementation planning and acceptance of specific responsibilities. It will be held in the Baltimore/Washington area Sept. 15-16 just prior to our Baltimore national meeting to be held Sept. 16-18. The planning session will begin at 7p.m. on Thursday and end by 4p.m. on Friday. The only additional cost will be for meals. Those intending to participate in this planning session should so indicate on their registration form for the Baltimore meeting. Details will be forthcoming.

The General Conference planning process is designed to facilitate involvement by as many members as possible. It is expected that as a core working group for the General Conference emerges and spends time together prior to 1984, this will enable a strong and mutually supportive team presence. New participants are welcomed at any stage in the planning with the expectation that they will both respect the work done prior to their entry and be prepared to contribute creatively and constructively. Please feel free to call Morris, Mary, or other Coordinating Committee members if you have questions about how you can participate best.

would be divided equally by the total number of participants. Clearly, this was more costly to those locals who did not have to travel from the Midwest or East Coast.

I was one of those who did not have much expense and therefore had to pay more than I would usually. The church had never expected this of me before. This being the first intentional shared travel pool I have ever participated in after some 15 years of national church participation, I have taken pause to think about its implications. A few observations:

First, this action set before us the realities of economic injustice. I was re-awakened to the fact that racism, homophobia sexism and economic injustice are all part of the same ugly bag of tricks. Though many sub-groups in our society suffer from these inequities, women and minorities are especially hard hit. In a small way the travel pool allowed us to say "no" to these realities and to symbolically recommit ourselves to keep on "keeping on".

This interview by Pat is a conversation with a special gay man and Affirmation member who lives in a United Methodist retirement complex.

What Is It Like to Be Retired and Gay and Living in a United Methodist Retirement Complex?

Lonely a great deal of the time, even if you have been a leader in your church and community before retirement.

The reporter said, "George, you are a legend."

I wanted to reply, "Lady, you don't know half of it."

The reporter was referring to George's deep roots in the community - - his family were active Methodists in the 1700's; his great-great grandfather gave four acres to the church in 1804 - - and to George's own service in church and community. George was lay leader of his church, served on most boards and committees. He was a leader in civic clubs, an alderman, a man honored with special rights and special citations.

He grew up and lived his life in communities where everyone knew everyone else. "There must have been other gay people, but we were afraid. I was uncomfortable about my sexual feeling in all my early years, but I was about forty before I really admitted to myself that I was gay. For a long time I was ashamed."

"Why can't people see that being gay doesn't make any difference to a person's service? The most beloved minister we've ever had, the one people still talk about and want back for funerals, was gay. The same for the best liked organist-choir director."

What one thing above all others would George like to change about his retirement years?

Above all else he would like to have a mate, a companion, to share the good years still ahead. He longs for the kind of partnership younger friends enjoy.

"I missed a lot by being so closeted. (His name is not George.) If I had been in a large city, it might have been different." In his small town, service to church and community was bought at the price of his own need for love. Now his closest living family members are cousins. He gathers the "remnant" from time to time.

"My only real friends are the people I've met at MCC (Metropolitan Community Church). I am so proud I got in touch with the church. But where are the men in their fifties and sixties? Everyone is so young. There must be thousands, probably tens of thousands of gay Methodists my age. What is happening to them?"

He observed that the other people in his retirement complex would probably be shocked if they knew he attended MCC and Affirmation. When asked if it would help if he could be open with them about his gayness, he replied "It would be heaven."

This newsletter is published four times a year. Cost is \$15 for newsletters mailed by bulk permit and \$20 for newsletters in sealed envelopes. Names used in this newsletter may be pen names. Communications to the Newsletter task force should be addressed to Nashville Affirmation, [redacted] Nashville, TN [redacted].

Affirmation welcomes to the Coordinating Committee, John Hannay. John is a leader in the Mid-Atlantic Affirmation and has been active in National Affirmation for several years. John brings to us his experience with the General Board of Church and Society.

Michael Collins

[redacted]
New York, NY [redacted]
[redacted]

Ava Scott

[redacted]
Philadelphia, PA [redacted]
[redacted]

Morris Floyd

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Minneapolis, MN [redacted]
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Leanne Tigert

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Mary Gaddis

[redacted]
Holy City, CA [redacted]
[redacted]

John Hannay

[redacted]
Washington, D.C. [redacted]
[redacted]

Lesbian Member

whose name cannot
be used

Lyle Loder

[redacted]
Los Angeles, CA [redacted]
[redacted]

FALL MEETING OFFERS SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Affirmation's Sept. 16-18 meeting in Baltimore promises to be the biggest and best in a long time. After reflecting on the many different reasons people have for participating in Affirmation and attending national meetings, the Coordinating Committee has projected a more diverse agenda than in our recent past.

The meeting will begin at 7 o'clock Friday evening (9/16) with a Worship Celebration and a time for building community among those present. Saturday morning there will be workshops on these topics: Building and maintaining a Support System; Lesbian and Gay Health Concerns; Linkages with other Social Justice Issues; Lesbian Spirituality; Combatting Racism and Classism; Creating a Gay and Lesbian Theology. Each member will be able to choose two workshops. Saturday afternoon's schedule includes a briefing by the General Conference working group on developing plans, including concerns of the local gay and lesbian community, and times for task groups to meet. Women's and men's support times are scheduled for Saturday evening. The weekend will conclude Sunday morning with a business meeting and worship; an open meeting of the Coordinating Committee will be held Sunday afternoon.

As indicated elsewhere, a General Conference planning session will be held prior to the meeting, beginning Thursday evening.

Early registration is encouraged to facilitate planning by local hosts. Be sure to indicate on the registration form if you are planning to attend the General Conference planning session Sept. 15-16, in addition to the full meeting.

COOPERATION OFFERED

Mid-Atlantic Affirmation is planning to mail informational packets to General Conference delegates from Annual Conferences in their region. The packets will include background material on Biblical interpretation, theology of ministry, psychological studies and personal stories and will pave the way for visits to delegation meetings next Spring. Early drafts of some materials are now being circulated, and there are outlines for others. If persons from other areas would be interested in following a similar strategy with General Conference delegates in their area, Mid-Atlantic Affirmation will cooperate to reduce printing and mailing costs. Write them at [REDACTED], Washington, DC [REDACTED].



A group of Affirmation folks would like to compile an Affirmation Cookbook for fund-raising and fun-raising purposes. Gay men and lesbians often meet over wonderful meals! Send your favorite recipe, you comments on the richness of sharing with other gays and lesbians, favorite quotes from our heritage, etc. We will award a free cook book to the best title suggested. Please sign your recipes with your name, pen name, or region. Send to:

Nashville Affirmation
[REDACTED]
Nashville, TN [REDACTED]

Registration Form Fall Meeting, Baltimore, Sept. 16-18

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____ I will be arriving: _____ Time _____

Estimated travel Costs _____ Travel Plans
(For travel pool) _____ (Flight, Etc.)

I will participate in the General Conf. planning session, Sept. 15-16 _____ yes _____ no

RETURN THIS FORM WITH \$20 REGISTRATION FEE TO: Mark Bowman

[REDACTED]
Washington, D.C. [REDACTED]

FIDELITY AND CELIBACY II

As projected in the March newsletter, the Division of Ordained Ministry (DOM) of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (BHEM) has approved "celibacy in singleness and fidelity in marriage" as a criterion for persons being considered for certification as candidates, probationary and full annual conference membership and appointment. Sources close to DOM inform us that approval came with little dissent at a meeting held in early April (the proposal still must be approved by a legislative task force and the full BHEM board).

DOM members clearly see the measure's main purpose as prohibiting the ordination or appointment of "avowed practicing homosexuals" (read: openly gay and lesbian persons), according to published reports.

There is some indication of substantial opposition to this proposal from across the church. The basis for the opposition is: once you start to make a detailed list of what is categorically unacceptable -- where does it stop? Before long we would be back to a narrow legalism which the UMC has tried to move beyond in recent years. If there is going to be such a list, surely it should be as complete as possible, yet it is evident

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COUNCIL UPHOLDS INVOLUNTARY LEAVE

On April 22, the Judicial Council of the U. M. Church ruled that "involuntary leave of absence under narrow circumstances" can be given to ordained clergy. The case was brought to the court by Morris Floyd, one of Affirmation's spokespersons, who was placed on leave of absence involuntarily by the Pacific and Southwest Conference in 1982.

The Council defined these "narrow circumstances" vaguely: "the provision may be used to resolve problems of appointment only as a last resort. The Bishop and Cabinet must have used and exhausted their pastoral responsibilities."

Floyd argued that the Disciplinary paragraph in question (#444) was ambiguous and, in the face of such ambiguity, the constitutional right of a full ministerial member of an annual conference to due process, including a trial, should be upheld. Bishop Jack Tuell, who also appeared to defend his ruling, argued that the intent of the 1980 General Conference was to create a new status of "involuntary leave" for clergy. Tuell also appealed to the Court to allow this

YOUNG ADULT CONSULTATION

Acting under a 1980 General Conference mandate, the General Board of Discipleship is conducting a consultation on young adult ministry this spring.

Affirmation became aware of the consultation last February when spokesperson Morris Floyd received the survey instrument which was sent to approximately 4,000 persons across the church to help determine the needs of young adults. Floyd received the questionnaire because he was a United Methodist participant in "Crossroads '82," a training event for young adults sponsored last summer by the National Council of Churches. (Ironically, a grant to the NCC from the American Lutheran Church made possible Floyd's presence as a resource person on ministry with gay men and lesbians.

On behalf of Affirmation, Floyd called Discipleship staffer Wayne Lindecker to point out how the survey instrument contributed to the invisibility of gay and lesbian young adults - and all other young adults (such as single parents, ethnic minorities, etc.) Lindecker expressed regret, indicat-

(Cont. on p. 6)



"administrative procedure" which bishops and cabinets need in "outrageous" situations in order to carry out their responsibility to congregations. Tuell stated that a bishop must have faith in the "complete moral integrity" of any pastor being appointed.

Correspondence between Tuell and Floyd which was presented to the Court made it clear that the involuntary leave was precipitated by Morris' request for an appointment to Gay and Lesbian Community Services in Minneapolis and was not related to his competence as an ordained clergy. Given the Judicial Council's ruling, there is a strong possibility that other lesbian and gay clergy will now find themselves summarily placed on involuntary leave because bishops, cabinets, and conferences will not be willing to struggle to find situations in which lesbian and gay clergy can utilize their gifts for ministry.

On the same day Floyd's case was heard before the Council, two of the other three cases presented orally to the council related to the sexual activity of clergy. Simultaneously there were also two annual conferences conducting trials in which a clergy was charged with sexual misconduct.

-Mark Bowman

General Conf. . . .Cont. from p. 1
will be those persons who plan to participate in Affirmation's General Conference presence. This will help us ensure follow-through on our implementation plans as we develop a sense of mutual support and accountability. It is also anticipated that the General Conference core working group (persons who will be present for all or most of the two-week time period) will receive training in affinity group practices and the techniques of non-violence. We hope that at least two dozen persons will form that core working group. Persons who can participate in Affirmation's General Conference presence for shorter periods of time are also encouraged to do so, and will be offered specific options for involvement.

Young Adult . . . Cont. from p. 5
He invited Morris to prepare a detailed written critique of the survey instrument and to present recommendations to ensure appropriate consideration of the needs of gay and lesbian young adults.

Floyd's criticism of the survey instrument included such crucial issues as the fact that it provided no way for young adults living in unmarried intimate partnerships to indicate that status (Respondents' partners could only be marked on the survey instrument as "roomates.") In addition, Floyd encouraged those planning the consultation to seek dialogue with openly gay and lesbian persons, since there were none on the task force. He also offered to facilitate connection of the consultation with gay and lesbian resources in the Dallas area, where the meeting will be held.

Two months later, a low level Discipleship staff member has said "Thanks, but no thanks," to Affirmation's offer. Members of the Affirmation network who participate in the consultation are urged to share your experience with Morris to enable further work with the General Board.

Fidelity . . . Cont. from p. 5
there (unfortunately) is no intent to exclude practicing racists from the ordained ministry.

It is helpful to remember (and to remind General Conference delegates) that the General Conference has rejected by large margins previous attempts to write legislation specifically excluding gay men and lesbians from ordination and appointment. However, "fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness" will be difficult to be against. It is important that we remind our delegates (and question delegate candidates to determine their understanding of) the larger issues.

Travel pool. . .Cont. from p. 2
Second, there was an awareness that we had to do this if we were to be able to lay any claim on our prophetic call to the larger church to consider the situation of lesbians and gays in the church and society and to win them to join hearts and hands with us in following Christ's call to a more perfect way. How could we with integrity question the church's homophobia if we did not turn the search light on our own methods and structures? Simply, the travel pool can help keep us honest.

Ultimately this stewardship issue -- this act of economic mutuality, will lead us to new spiritual insight. There seems to be a reciprocity between risking costly discipleship and our relationship with God. Spirituals sing of this truth. Dietrich Bonhoeffer says this in Cost of Discipleship. We do not yet know all that we will learn from this simply change in our travel policy but I am confident that it brings us closer to the economics of Jesus that we have ever been before.

This period in our history as gays and lesbians in the United States may well call us to explore more ways we can stand present with each other in difficult situations. It will call for a comprehensive look at our human resources, our financial bases and our being good stewards of what we have and who we are.

James, NYC

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